

MANAGEMENT OF STRESS AT WORK POLICY

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Target Organisation(s)	Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust
Target Departments	All Departments
Target staff categories	All Staff

Policy Overview:

This policy sets out the Trust's aims and objectives for the management of stress in the workplace, and promoting and sustaining psychological as well as physical wellbeing. The intention of the policy, is wherever possible, to provide support to managers in identifying signs of stress, and ensuring that employees who experience symptoms of stress (whether work or home related) are offered support. This takes account of the NHS Toolkit: Creating Healthy Workplaces which has been produced in response to NICE Guidelines (September 2015).

Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust (WAHT) recognises the negative impact that workplace stress has on its staff and patients. The Trust is committed to tackling the causes of workplace stress and providing support for staff and managers to deal with and reduce stress.

The Trust's Working Well intranet pages include a whole section on stress management with tools and support for both individuals and managers.

Key amendments to this Document:

Date	Amendment	By:
Aug 2012	Policy reviewed and amended to clarify the process.	J Malone
March 2015	Policy reviewed and minor amendments to section 4.5	S McDonald
Sept 2015	Review of Policy to take account of NHS Employers best practice and NICE Guidelines	D Drew

February 2017	Disability question added into supporting documents equality impact assessment tool	
November 17	Document extended whilst under review	TLG
December 2017	Document extended for 3 months as per TLG recommendation	TLG
March 2018	Document extended for 3 months as approved by TLG	TLG
June 2018	Document extended for 3 months as per TLG recommendation	TLG
June 2019	Document extended for 12 months whilst review process takes place	Rachel Morris/Tina Ricketts
June 2020	Document extended for 6 months during COVID-19 period	

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1. Introduction

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines work related stress as:

‘the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them at work’. (HSE 2014)

Work related stress develops because a person is unable to cope with the demands being placed on them. It is not in itself an illness, but physical or mental illness may subsequently develop if stress is not addressed.

Two people can be subject to the exact same experience and have very different physical or emotional responses. Within a workplace each and every situation can bring a different reaction to different individuals. Stress is subjective and is all about how the individual receives and interprets the factors which could cause stress. Staff can be experiencing symptoms of stress, which could be caused by a number of different factors, but their tolerance can become reduced by factors in the workplace. This could result in a sudden and unexpected reaction to an event(s), but the event may only be a contributing factor rather than the only factor.

A certain level of pressure at work is desirable as pressure helps to motivate people and will boost their energy and performance levels. But when the pressure people face exceeds their ability to cope, it becomes a negative rather than a positive force – in other words stress. People can feel stressed when there are too few demands on them, when they are bored, under-valued, by-passed, or under-stimulated. Stress is not a medical condition but research shows that prolonged exposure to stress is linked to poor mental health, such as anxiety and depression.

Ultimately any part of the human body can be damaged by exposure to stress over a long period of time, or as a result of a sudden traumatic event which causes harm or damage. Stress related ill health can present itself in many ways including physical and psychological health problems, or changes in social interaction or ability at work.

The NICE guidance and Toolkit “Creating Healthy NHS Workplaces September 2015” centres on interventions to promote mental wellbeing through healthy working conditions. The recommendations for NHS organisations include:

- promoting a culture of participation, equality and fairness that is based on open communication and inclusion
- using frameworks such as Health and Safety Executive (HSE) management standards for work-related stress to promote and protect employee mental wellbeing
- considering flexible working arrangements

The Trust will use information from the annual Staff Opinion Survey, the monitoring of sickness absence records, and Occupational Health/counselling referrals, as well as Managers risk assessments to actively identify work place stressors and develop action plans to reduce the risks and prevent harm.

2. Scope of this document

It is a requirement of all employers to reduce the possibility or likelihood of events which may, over a period of time, or as a one off, cause employees’ health to be

affected. If the risk cannot be removed then it must be either reduced, or some protection placed between the user and the risk which could include job rotation, to enable staff to have some respite from the cause of stress.

It is unrealistic and undesirable for any organisation to seek to eliminate all pressure and the Trust's approach is to raise awareness of the potential for stress to lead to health problems, and to support individuals and managers in identifying where particular support may help someone to avoid harmful effects on their physical and mental wellbeing.

2.1 Recognising stress

Stress can present itself in many different ways including physical symptoms, changes in normal behaviour and emotional symptoms. These can develop into health conditions including depression and anxiety, heart disease and irritable bowel syndrome.

The following characteristics, especially in combination, could indicate that a ward/department/service may have a problem with stress.

- High levels of sickness absence (deteriorating attendance and regular bouts of recurring illness)
- High staff turnover
- Increased accidents/incidents
- Increased disputes/grievances/conflicts with colleagues
- Noticeable reduction in performance levels
- Poor decision making/increased errors
- Erratic timekeeping
- Loss of motivation and commitment.
- Incidents of violence at work
- NHS Staff Survey data

Clearly, different people react in different ways. The following are just some of the effects stress might have on individuals:

- **Emotional effects:** anxiety, anger, frustration, moodiness, irritability, loss of pleasure and interest, despair, depression and impaired sleep, negative thoughts, increased anxiety, increase alertness, unnecessary guilt, panic, mood swings
- **Physical effects:** tenseness, headaches, tiredness, appetite disturbance, light headaches, weakened immune system (leading to frequent minor infections), raised blood pressure, palpitations, chest pain, stomach cramps, nausea
- **Psychological effects:** impairment of perception, concentration, memory, judgement, decisiveness, accuracy, motivation and creativity (thinking, feeling, doing)
- **Social effects:** relationships may be more difficult, withdrawing/not wanting to socialise, increased alcohol, nicotine or drug intake, under or overeating, becoming accident prone, working longer hours, not taking breaks, no longer having time for leisure activities

- **Behavioural effects:** being short tempered, aggressive or compulsive, crying

A stress indicator tool is available on the Working Well intranet pages.

2.2 Coping with stress

The following techniques can help individuals to 'self- manage' stress:

- **Manage your time:** Prioritise, set reasonable deadlines, delegate when possible
- **Pace yourself:** take regular breaks away from your work area
- **Face up to things:** Create an action plan for difficult situations, take it step by step, learn from it.
- **Practice being assertive:** Avoid over-commitment, don't become a people pleaser.
- **Communicate:** Don't be afraid to ask for help, use all the available resources you need.
- **Develop and maintain social support:** Don't lose contact with your network of friends both in and out of work. The more isolated you are the more stressed you are likely to be.
- **Establish a sensible work/life balance:** Maintain boundaries between work and home, avoid regularly working late or taking work home. Use your holiday entitlement in a planned way
- **Maintain physical health:** Learn to relax, reduce smoking, eat and drink sensibly, reduce caffeine and alcohol

The Trust's Occupational Health Department can offer advice and support, signpost to external organisations, or refer for free counselling. Individuals can also access a Self-care course which has specifically been devised to help staff to identify stressors in their lives and develop their own action plans to reduce the ill effects of stress.

3. Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Stress Management Standards

Under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 every employer has a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all their workforce.

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1999) employers have a duty to assess the health and safety risks to which their staff are exposed to at work.

The Trust seeks to reduce stressors in the workplace, help staff to manage stress whilst they are at work, and provide support and counselling to deal with the symptoms of stress. The HSE identifies six primary sources of work related stress.

1. **Demands:** such as workload, work patterns and the work environment
2. **Control:** such as how much say the person has in the way they do their work
3. **Support:** such as the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the organisation, line management and colleagues
4. **Relationships:** such as promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour

5. **Role:** such as whether people understand their role within the organisation and whether the organisation ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles
6. **Change:** such as how organisational change is managed and communicated in the organisation.

Managers will self-assess themselves using the HSE Stress Management Competency Indicator Tool <http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/mcit.pdf>, and will be supported to implement changes in their behaviour and practice where necessary.

Organisational change is likely to be a key cause of stress in the NHS. Whilst change can be positive, staff may be particularly vulnerable to stress where there is a risk of:

- Redundancy
- Downgrading or re-banding
- Outsourcing or transfer to another employer

Higher levels of presenteeism (going to work despite being unwell) are often observed in staff going through restructuring as there is a perception that those with poor attendance are more likely at risk of redundancy. Organisational change is also linked with an increased risk of bullying which has been found to increase stress. In order to manage the risks of stress from organisational change the Trust would expect managers to follow the policy on Management of Change, ensuring that employees have timely information, adequate consultation, and opportunity to influence proposals, are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs, aware of timetables for change, and have access to relevant support.

3.1 Management Behaviours which Impact on Stress at work

NHS Employers have conducted research published in October 2014 which focuses on management behaviours which impact on stress at work. WAHT expects its managers to display supportive management behaviour and to foster healthy working relationships between staff.

- **Supportive Management Behaviour**
This includes providing feedback and communicating openly on actions/decisions taken, utilising the knowledge skills and experience of staff, considering how to protect staff from competing demands, carrying out high quality appraisals, providing staff development opportunities, leading by example and being aware of employee health and wellbeing.
- **Positive working relationships**
This includes ensuring that managers are aware of the true value of effective team work and the impact organisational change can have on performance, team development, applying policies fairly and consistently, communicating effectively and personally rather than relying on email, and being aware of the impact of their own behaviour on others.
- **Positive contribution**
It is recognised that having information and feedback is central for a feeling of wellbeing at work. This includes ensuring appraisals are carried out and ensuring a balance between praise and constructive criticism/feedback. Good managers will share positive feedback and customer/client satisfaction with staff. They will

also ensure that any challenge is put across in a constructive way – a culture of “courteous challenge”.

- **Participation/being kept informed**

Staff should have regular updates on key issues and regular feedback. This can be through regular team meetings where views can be shared and questions asked and responded to, sharing feedback from staff surveys so that staff can see how this has benefited them, ensuring that staff hear about things first rather than from other sources within or outside the organisation.

3.2 Workplace features that have a negative impact on health and wellbeing

- **Work Overload**

Stress is more likely to occur when there is a loss of control in managing demand which is usually through workload pressure. Managers need to understand their team’s workload, and the strengths of their team, so that they can effectively allocate tasks. They need to support staff in prioritising their tasks, and develop a culture where staff feel confident in raising concerns about workload. They should encourage supportive team work and review and reduce unnecessary paperwork and administration.

- **Poor equipment and resources**

Not having the right tools for the job is something which heightens stress, particularly where people are busy. Managers need to ensure that staff have the right equipment and that it is maintained properly. Where faults occur they need to communicate this to the team with an update of when they will be repaired and what should happen in the meantime.

- **Difficult Home Life Balance**

Where there is a perception that work is impacting on home life, or prevents someone leaving on time to care for a dependent this can impact on levels of stress. Managers should not insist on challenging timescales where these do not need to exist and should monitor staff working hours and forward plan appropriately. They should empower staff to feel confident about raising questions and concerns around unreasonable deadlines.

- **Work related violence and aggression**

Staff are likely to have less resilience if they are subjected to behaviour at work which they feel undermines their sense of value and self-worth. The Trust will have a zero tolerance approach to violence towards staff and will communicate successful prosecutions to allow staff to feel that they have more control over the work environment. Managers should ensure that staff are aware of the Management of Violence and Aggression Policy, and the Dignity at Work Policy, provide resilience and conflict resolution training where necessary, and pursue prosecutions and educate the public so that staff feel protected.

Immediate support should be offered to all staff following a stressful event, and managers and staff should be fully aware of what action to take if the staff member is experiencing difficulties. This is outlined in the Trust Policy “Support for staff who are involved in traumatic/stressful situations”.

4.0 Responsibility and Duties

Overall responsibility for this Policy rests with the Trust Board. The lead Executive Director for this Policy will be the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development.

4.1 Executive Directors will be responsible for ensuring that:

- All employees are informed of the existence of this Policy
- The Policy is implemented and operated effectively within their directorate
- Managerial action is sympathetic, fair and equitable and is monitored effectively
- Managers are actively encouraged to consider any clinical, operational and ergonomic factors that cause organisational and personal stress in the working environment.
- Staff have access to relevant training and have access to information regarding stress. This is available through the Working Well Web pages, Self-Care Programme and Resilience training.
- Managers are aware of the legal issues concerning stress at work and have access to training.
- Staff are provided with support through the Working Well Centre, including where necessary counselling
- Incidents and injury claims that indicate stress as a key cause are thoroughly investigated.

4.2 All managers with staff management responsibility

Staff management requires a particular set of skills, one element of which is the ability to demonstrate insight and understanding of the impact of stress upon individuals. Managers should endeavour to preserve and promote positive mental health and reduce stress. Supportive management behaviour plays one of the most important roles in reducing stress as staff look to managers for approval, appreciation and information. This is particularly important during times of organisational change.

Managers/supervisors should:

- Self-assess the impact of their behaviour against the HSE Management Standards for Work Related Stress
- Participate in training to understand the negative impacts of stress and how to manage stress related issues.
- Ensure good and open communication with staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Ensure that staff are fully trained to discharge their duties and are provided with meaningful development opportunities.
- Ensure that bullying and harassment is not tolerated.
- Monitor the impact that stress is having upon themselves and upon colleagues, e.g. by talking to staff and monitoring sickness absence data.
- Demonstrate skill in diagnosing where there is the potential for workplace stress to have a harmful effect on colleagues.
- Take enough interest in colleagues, without being inappropriately intrusive; to understand when stresses from outside of work may be causing heightened sensitivity to workplace stress.

- Discuss and agree actions with colleagues to help them avoid the harmful effects of stress. This may include seeking support from other teams/services such as Occupational Health, Human Resources or trade union representatives.
- Assess the potential for making changes to working patterns/methods to help alleviate the harmful effects of stress.
- Co-operate with Trust-wide initiatives to audit and monitor potential stressors to assist in the identification of vulnerable staff groups and encourage staff to participate in local and national staff surveys.
- Carry out risk assessments and identify actions to reduce these risks.
- Promptly investigate any reported incidents of stress and carry out a Stress Risk Assessment.

4.3 Employees

It is expected that all Trust staff will strive to keep themselves and colleagues safe by avoiding harmful effects from stress. Having positive working relationships builds resilience and wellbeing within staff.

All staff should:

- Familiarise themselves with this policy
- Seek access to training where necessary to understand the negative impacts of stress.
- Be aware of the impact that stress is having upon themselves and upon colleagues and be prepared to raise concerns with their manager if felt necessary.
- Report incidents and accidents
- Support initiatives that the Trust takes to avoid/alleviate any harmful effects experienced as a result of stress.
- To seek support from the Occupational Health Department, including counselling when recommended.

4.4 Health and Safety and Security Manager

- Train and support managers in implementing risk assessments (including stress risk assessments)
- Initiate and undertake stress audits
- Inform the Trust Board and the Health and Safety Committee to any changes and development in the field of stress at work.
- Incidents and injury claims that indicate stress as a key cause are thoroughly investigated.

4.5 Human Resources

HR Advisors can help, as an internal resource in the Trust, by advising managers and supporting staff members who feel that they are experiencing difficulties as a result of stress. This may include:

- Working with colleagues in the training, health and safety, risk management and occupational health departments to provide training to raise awareness of potentially harmful stressors.

- Working with colleagues to implement Management of Stress policy including supporting managers.
- Facilitating access to detailed information about causes and levels of sickness absence, turnover and staff engagement (from staff surveys).
- Suggesting changes in working practices
- Liaising with Occupational Health and other external agencies to help provide confidential support

4.6 Occupational Health

The Occupational Health Department will be responsible for:

- Providing specialist advice and where appropriate supporting stress awareness training.
- Supporting Human Resources, Health and Safety and Training and Development Department in the training of managers regarding stress management and risk assessment.
- Assessing employees who self-refer or are referred by their line managers due to concerns about their wellbeing, or stress-related sickness absence;
- providing such employees with support and confidential counselling. Staff will be offered an appointment within 10 days of the receipt of the referral
- Where a management referral has been made a response would be given back to the manager within 3 days of the appointment. The assessment would include:
 - Fitness to work
 - Individual vulnerability to stress and liaising with GP or treating specialist if appropriate
 - Advice on changing duties
 - Advice after a period of absence on rehabilitation programmes which may include a temporary change in working hours and /or duties
 - Advice, together with the Human Resources Department, on redeployment, relocation or ill health retirement as appropriate
 - Advice and support for managers on monitoring perceived stressors in order to minimise risk
- Monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of measures to reduce stress in the Trust.
- Encouraging employees to report workplace issues to managers themselves. However, when issues have not been reported, Occupational Health may need to inform managers or Human Resources in order to reduce risks to the employee's health. This will be carried out with the employee's informed consent taking into consideration guidelines on confidentiality published by the General Medical Council and Faculty of Occupational Medicine.
- Referral to specialised counsellors who can help give advice on dealing with work related or home related stress.

4.7 Trade Unions

- Advising and supporting members of staff regarding the application of policies including whistleblowing and dignity at work
- Monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of the policy in partnership with HR and managers to ensure that processes are applied fairly and transparently
- Working in partnership with management to support improvements in staff health, safety and wellbeing

- Having a positive approach to tackling stress in the workplace.
- To be provided with paid time away from normal duties to attend any trade union training relating to workplace stress
- To have access to collective and anonymous data from HR

4.8 Duties of Safety Representatives

- To be at the forefront and have a pivotal role in the implementation of this Policy
- To be able to consult with members on the issue of stress, including conducting any workplace surveys;
- To be involved in the risk assessment process;
- Conducting joint inspections of the workplace to ensure that environmental stressors are properly controlled;
- To be allowed access to collective and anonymous data from human resources;
- To be provided with paid time away from normal duties to attend any trade union training relating to workplace stress;

5. Policy Detail

The HSE has introduced Management Standards to help and encourage organisations to assess workplace stress. The Trust will aim to meet these standards and in so doing minimise stress at work.

It will also promote relevant staff policies and good management practice and provide appropriate training, and support for staff who have identified work related stress as an issue.

All staff are encouraged to report on Datix all accidents, and incidents. They may also report any episodes of ill-health relating to work that they judge to have resulted from work related stress.

It is a fundamental principle of this Policy to create a culture whereby employees are sympathetically supported by their Line Managers when they report symptoms of stress. Feeling highly stressed at work should NOT be seen as reflecting any implications of competence to do the job.

5.1. Identifying indicators of stress

Where stress is caused or made worse by work and could lead to ill health, the risk should be assessed. We will identify where stress is likely to occur by:

- Stress Working Group will undertake a baseline structured risk assessment against the HSE stress management standards
- Stress working group monitor incidents and data relating to stress including sickness absence, OH, counselling and Staff Support Officer referral information to identify hotspots. This will be reported through health and safety committee, JNCC, and Workforce Assurance Group with feedback on actions taken to address the problem.
- The HR Department will work with divisions to identify signs of stress from the annual staff survey, other data, or other local pulse surveys
- Managers identify potential stressors as part of their departmental risk assessments (Refer to Trust Risk Assessment Policy).

- Individuals identify stress within their team or with a colleague and signpost them to the Working Well intranet pages or Occupational Health for support
- The individual identifies their own stress and self-refers to Occupational Health for support. Stress indicator tools are available on the Working Well intranet pages.

5.2 Stress Risk Assessment

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 requires all employers to assess the nature and scale of risk to health and safety in the workplace in order to minimise the impact of all potential hazards. This is now understood to cover psychological hazards; therefore the assessment should include the mental stresses of each job role as well as physical risks to health.

- Managers identify potential stressors as part of their departmental risk assessments (Refer to Trust Risk Assessment Policy).
- Managers then identify actions to reduce these risks. In particular the six key areas identified in section 3 should be considered. (See appendices A and B)
- A manager should promptly investigate any reported incidents of stress and carry out a Stress Risk Assessment with a view to putting in place control measures. (see Appendix B and C)

Steps for Risk Assessment

1. Identifying Potential Hazards i.e. workplace stressors (refer to Appendix A). It is also important to consider personal and outside work activities etc which may contribute to levels of stress.
2. Deciding who may be harmed by these workplace stressors
3. Deciding whether suitable and sufficient control measures are in place to prevent that harm or could more be done. This will include evaluating the risk and taking action such as:
 - Consulting with employees to discuss problems
 - Working in partnership with employees to take action
 - Ensuring issues affecting individuals are addressed
 - Feedback results to employees
 - Recording the findings
 - Monitoring and review

Specialist guidance/advice is available from the Occupational Health Department, the Health, Safety & Security Manager, Human Resources, or trade union representatives. Managers will be responsible for undertaking risk assessments for stress within their own department using the guidance contained within the Trust's Risk Assessment Policy.

5.3 Resources for Managers in recognising symptoms of stress in their team

The Working Well/Occupational Health Intranet Pages contain a whole section on identifying and dealing with stress. This includes a Toolkit for Managers and a link to the HSE Stress Management Competency Tool. In addition, the Occupational Health Department, Health and Safety Adviser and Human Resources Advisers can provide advice and support.

5.4 Resources for Individuals in recognising and managing their own Stress

The Working Well/Occupational Health Intranet pages contain a portfolio of tools and advice for individuals on identifying their own stress, developing their own action plan to build their resilience, and also signposts to internal and external sources of support.

6. Implementation

The Trust will develop and work towards implementing standards of good management in tackling occupational stress, in line with the Health & Safety Executive’s Stress Management Standards (See Appendix A) and the HSE Stress Management Competencies. It will also ensure that systems are in place to respond to any individual concerns, primarily through Occupational Health.

6.1 Plan for Dissemination

The policy will be placed in the Trust’s HR Document library on the Intranet and will be publicised through Trust briefing, Daily Brief, policy update briefings for managers, and notified to the Trust Board by the Workforce Assurance Group.

6.2 Training and awareness

The Trust’s Working Well intranet pages include a dedicated section on management of stress with tools and support for both individuals and managers. This resource is available for all staff and is regularly updated to include stress assessment questionnaires, advice, guidance and signposting to outside agencies.

- Awareness of this Policy will be raised throughout the Trust. It will form an integral part of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and of all Management Development training.
- A number of people management workshops on this topic are scheduled throughout the year. These include Being Absence Minded, Management of Stress, Resilience Training and Human Factors training
- Awareness sessions will be provided as part of the implementation of the Policy to enable all managers and staff-side representatives to understand the application of the policy.
- Specific training will be provided for ALL managers who are required to undertake Health and Safety and Stress Risk assessments as an integral function of their role.
- Training for staff is available in the form of the Self Care Programme and Resilience Training.

6.3 Stress Working Group

The Trust has established a Workplace Stress Working Group which consists of Human Resources, Occupational Health, Health and Safety, Risk Governance and Staff side colleagues working in partnership. The aim of the group is to:

- Undertake a baseline of the current position and introduce monitoring system.
- Raise profile of the work around stress management and ensure that staff recognise that the Trust takes their health and wellbeing seriously.

- Act as a focus group for best practice
- Work as a discussion forum for events/initiatives that will support the Trust to manage stress more effectively.
- Consult with staff support networks to get their perspective on effectiveness of the policy.

7. Monitoring

Performance against the policy will be monitored by the Stress Working Group reporting to the JNCC, Workforce Assurance Group and the Risk Executive Group

8. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in 2 years or earlier by the JNCC or Workforce Assurance Group in the light of any legislative changes, developments in good employment practice and to ensure its continuing relevance and effectiveness.

Actions taken under this Policy will be monitored in terms of Equality and Diversity.

9. References

Health and Safety at Work Act 1974	
Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999	
HSE Stress Management Standards and Management Competencies	
NHSE guidance on Management of Stress at Work (October 2014)	
Mental Health First Aid England Line Managers Resource (2013)	
NHS Managers Toolkit “Creating Health NHS Workplaces” (September 2015)	
Equality Act 2010	
Sickness Absence Health and Wellbeing Policy	WAHT-HR-072
Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy	WAHT-HR-445
Dignity at Work Policy	WAHT-HR-016
Management of Change Policy	WAHT-HR-036
Health & Safety Policy	WAHT-CG-125
Risk Management Strategy and Policy	WAHT-CG-007
Risk Assessment Procedure	WAHT-CG-002

10. Consultation and approval process

The policy has been developed in consultation with staff side and management representatives through the Policies Working Group.

The policy has been approved by the Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee and the Workforce Assurance Group.

Appendix A

HSE Stress Management Standards

The Trust will develop and work towards implementing the following standards of good management in tackling occupational stress, in line with the Health & Safety Executive's Stress Management Standards. These will be assessed through the Annual Staff Opinion Survey.

Standard 1: Demands (includes issues such as work load, work patterns and the work environment)

The standard states that:

- Employees indicate that they are able to cope with the demands of the job.
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.
- What should be happening / aims to be achieved:
- The Trust provides employees with adequate and achievable demands in relation to the agreed hours of work.
- People's skills and abilities are matched to the job demands.
- Jobs are designed to be within the capabilities of employees.
- Employees' concerns about their work environment are addressed.

Standard 2: Control (How much say the person has in the way they do their work)

The standard states that:

- Employees indicate that they are able to have a say about the way they do their work
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.
- What should be happening / aims to be achieved: where possible, employees have control over their pace of work
- Employees are encouraged to use their skills and initiative to do their work
- Where possible, employees are encouraged to develop new skills to help them undertake new and challenging pieces of work
- The Trust encourages employees to develop their skills.
- Employees have a say over when breaks can be taken
- Employees are consulted over their work patterns

Standard 3: Support (includes the encouragement, sponsorship and resources provided by the Trust, line management and colleagues)

The standard states that:

- Employees indicate that they receive adequate information and support from their colleagues and superiors.
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns. What should be happening / aims to be achieved:
- The Trust has policies and procedures to adequately support employees
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to support their staff
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to support their colleagues
- Employees know what support is available and how and when to access it

- Employees know how to access the required resources to do their job
- Employees receive regular and constructive feedback

Standard 4: Relationships (includes promoting positive working to avoid conflict and dealing with unacceptable behaviour)

The standard states that:

- Employees indicate that they are not subjected to unacceptable behaviours, e.g. bullying at work.
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.
- The Trust promotes positive behaviours at work to avoid conflict and ensure fairness.
- Employees share information relevant to their work.
- The Trust has agreed policies and procedures to prevent or resolve unacceptable behaviour.
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage managers to deal with unacceptable behaviour
- Systems are in place to enable and encourage employees to report unacceptable behaviour.

Standard 5: Role (Whether people understand their role within the Trust and whether the Trust ensures that the person does not have conflicting roles)

The standard states that:

- Employees indicate that they understand their role and responsibilities.
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.
- The Trust ensures that, as far as possible, the differing requirements it places upon employees are compatible.
- The Trust provides information to enable employees to understand their role and responsibilities
- The Trust ensures that, as far as possible, the requirements it places upon employees are clear
- Systems are in place to enable employees to raise concerns about any uncertainties or conflicts they have in their roles and responsibilities

Standard 6: Change (How organisational change (large or small) is managed and communicated in the Trust)

The standard states that:

- Employees indicate that the Trust engages them frequently when undergoing an organisational change.
- Systems are in place locally to respond to any individual concerns.
- What should be happening / aims to be achieved:
- The Trust provides employees with timely information to enable them to understand the reasons for proposed changes.
- The Trust ensures adequate employee consultation on changes and provides opportunities for employees to influence proposals.
- Employees are aware of the probable impact of any changes to their jobs. If necessary, employees are given training to support any changes in their jobs
- Employees are aware of timetables for changes;
- Employees have access to relevant support during changes.

WORKPLACE STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT FORM **Appendix B**

Job/Department assessed:	Number of people covered by assessment:	Responsible Manager:
Assessor:	Date of Assessment:	Signature:

Potential Hazards i.e. Workplace Stressors: (Refer to Stress Policy Sec 3)	Existing Controls: (i.e. how are the hazards being managed)	Current Risk Rating: (Use the Risk Scoring Matrix to evaluate the level of risk)	What more can be done?	Target Date for implementation:	By Whom:
Demands (for example overwork and under work)					
Control (for example lack of control over accountability for work activities)					
Role (for example staff feeling that the job requires them to behave in conflicting ways, confusion about structures and job roles)					
<i>EXAMPLE: Staff may be at risk if they do not have planned goals and objectives for their job</i>	<i>The Trust has in place an appraisal process which allows managers and staff to clearly define their roles and responsibilities and training needs.</i>	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Ensure that all staff receive an annual appraisal.</i>	<i>Within 12 months</i>	<i>Local managers</i>

Policy

Potential Hazards i.e. Workplace Stressors: (Refer to Stress Policy Sec 3)	Existing Controls: (i.e. how are the hazards being managed)	Current Risk Rating: (Use the Risk Scoring Matrix to evaluate the level of risk)	What more can be done?	Target Date for implementation:	By Whom:
Change (for example uncertainty about what is happening, fears about job security)					
Relationships (for example with Line Managers and colleagues)					
Support (for example lack of support, not being able to balance the demands of work and life outside of work)					
Other (examples of other stressors may include working environment, business travel etc)					

STRESS - RISK SCORING MATRIX **APPENDIX B (CONTINUED)**

		Probability				
		Rare (less than 20%)	Unlikely (20 – 40%)	Possible (40-60%)	Likely (60-80%)	Almost certain +80%
Consequence	Insignificant	1	2	3	4	5
	Minor	2	4	6	8	10
	Moderate	3	6	9	12	15
	Major	4	8	12	16	20
	Catastrophic	5	10	15	20	25

ACTION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Score	Risk	Action	Reporting Requirements
1-6	Risk is within tolerance	Within risk appetite / tolerance Managed through normal control measures at the level it was identified	Within tolerance so no reporting Record on risk register at the level the risk was identified
8-10		Within risk appetite / tolerance Review control measures at the level it was identified	Within tolerance so no reporting Record on risk register at the level the risk was identified
12-15	Risk Exceeds tolerance	Exceeds risk appetite / tolerance Actions to be developed, implemented and monitored at the level the risk was identified	Record on Risk Register at the level the risk was identified Report to next level of management
16-20		Exceeds risk appetite / tolerance Immediate action required Treatment plans to be developed, implemented and monitored at the level the risk	Record on Risk Register at the level the risk was identified Report to next level of management With Executive Director approval - enter onto Corporate Risk Register

Policy

was identified

Appendix C

Action to be taken if an employee reports they are stressed whilst at work

Once made aware of a reported problem of stress a manager should promptly discuss the problem with the individual, with a view to resolution if possible. As a result of this conversation, additional management action may need to be taken, depending on the severity of the case and the reason for the stress. A note should be kept in the personal file of all the discussions and contacts.

Note: Sometimes, individuals might say that they 'feel stressed' when actually all they really mean is that they have had a particularly difficult day. It isn't necessary to make a note of every 'one-off' event that is reported. However, managers should monitor these situations and complete the correct documentation at a later date if the problem remains unresolved or the situation warrants it.

If an employee reports that the stress has arisen directly as a result of their work, then the manager should try to identify the root of the problem with them. The aim is to identify possible actions that could be taken to help the individual deal with the problem and resolve the situation. It may be appropriate for HR and/or OH to be involved at this stage. In this case a record should be kept in the individual's personal file using the form in Appendix D – Stress at Work Consultation Form.

The manager should check with the individual at regular intervals to ensure that no further issues have arisen, identify whether any further action is required, and to facilitate a resumption of full duties at a time that is mutually agreeable to all parties. Advice from HR and/or Occupational Health should be sought as soon as possible to gain access to appropriate support from outside agencies, or via the Trust's free staff counselling service.

If the cause of the stress involves an employee's relationship with their manager, another manager or a more senior manager should conduct this consultation. If the stress has arisen as a result of the employees home circumstances but it is affecting or being made worse by their work, then the problem should still be discussed using the form in Appendix D and kept on file. Again, this must include identifying any actions that can be taken to alleviate the impact that work is having on the individual's stress in order to help them with their personal situation, (for example a temporary reduction of hours, a period of annual leave etc.).

When a manager receives personal information it is important that the individual's right to privacy is respected, therefore, it is not appropriate to include details of the nature of the personal problem in a file note, unless consent is given. Agreement from the individual will also be needed if the manager needs to discuss the personal problem with another party.

What to do if a person reports sick with stress

When an individual is off sick with work related stress it important that they are signposted to support, either from staff counsellor, occupational health or external agencies such as Cruse Bereavement Support. There is research that shows that when individuals are off sick for more than 4 weeks it becomes more difficult for them

to engage, and to return to work. Depending on the individual and the circumstances an **early referral to occupational health may be appropriate**.

Action to be taken if an employee reports they are stressed whilst absent.

If an employee is absent as a result of stress it is **important to promptly establish and maintain contact** and offer help and support as appropriate. If an employee has reported the stress as being directly as a result of their work, steps must be taken to understand why this is the case. If the individual contacts their manager then the manager should try to determine the root cause and discuss some solutions/support keeping a record of these discussions in the personal file.

When an individual has been off sick with stress/anxiety for a period of **2 weeks a management referral should be made to Occupational Health** to ensure that support is offered at the earliest opportunity.

The letter in Appendix D (i) should be sent by the manager to any employee who has submitted a GP's certificate and has been absent for a period of 2 weeks if they have not personally contacted their manager in that time to discuss their reasons for absence. The reason for this is because there is research that shows that the longer a person is off with stress the more difficult it is to return or resolve. (Please note that this is independent of the employee having phoned their manager to report their sickness absence as per Trust policy).

If this does not prompt a response from the employee, a further letter should be sent at an appropriate time taking advice from Human Resources colleagues (appendix D (ii)).

A final letter in Appendix D (iii) should be sent to the individual if there has been no contact after the initial letter and no prospect of return to work. At this point the individual will have been absent from work for some time and will be considered to be on long term sick leave. Please refer to the Sickness Absence Health and Wellbeing Policy for further guidance or contact your HR Advisor. Occupational Health advice should be sought as appropriate.

The process of contacting and communicating with the individual may also include the **consideration of a request for a home visit** if they have been absent for a period of 2 weeks or longer, and are unable to come in to their work location.

A record of the dates that the letters are sent, confirmation that contact has been made and the details of any agreed outcomes must be kept on the individual's personal file.

What to do if the person requests no contact

Sometimes employees do not want to be contacted. Do not accept this at face value and sever all contact with the individual as evidence shows clearly that this hinders recovery and greatly reduces the chances of a successful return to work. People may request no contact because they feel anxious, embarrassed or ashamed about the way they are feeling. A sympathetic manner, being sensitive and treating the person normally can help to overcome this.

Sometimes, a request for no contact can arise because the manager is perceived to have been a factor in the employee becoming unwell. In such circumstances, options could include offering another colleague to make contact or someone from occupational health. If there are work issues (real or perceived) it is essential that these are addressed or it will be unlikely that the person will return to work.

If you have made all reasonable efforts to communicate with an individual and they refuse to remain in contact with you then you cannot be expected to anticipate what reasonable adjustments might help them to return to work.

What do when an employee returns to work after stress related absence

Once notification is received of a proposed date for return to work, a return to work meeting should be organised with the employee, the manager and the HR Advisor together with the trade union representative to agree what adjustments may be necessary to support a sustainable return to work (and ultimately, if successful, a resumption to full duties at a time that is considered to be mutually acceptable to all parties).

Advice should already have been sought from Occupational Health to assist you in doing this, but a return to work plan may include one or more of the following: reduced hours; re-structured workload; temporary adjustment of supervisory /management responsibilities; additional training or support etc. The individual's progress on their return must be regularly monitored, reviewed and managed as required and this should be documented as above.

When an employee returns from sick leave with stress the most important thing is for the manager and the team to make them feel welcomed back. Remember to make sure that the person does not return to an impossible workload or an inferior workspace. Take account where possible of any reasonable adjustments that have been recommended by the Occupational Health Department. Set achievable goals that makes the person feel that they are making progress, and be aware that some people may offer to take on too much to prove themselves. Take the time to have frequent informal chats to provide an opportunity to say if they feel there are any problems. Make sure that you do not make the person feel that they are being over monitored or scrutinised though.

Examples of Reasonable Adjustments

Occupational Health will be best place to make recommendations on adjustments that you could make to the workload, work pattern, or work design that may help to support the individual's return to work. Managers should consider whether these short term adjustments are possible to implement, and discuss alternatives with Occupational Health. Examples of reasonable adjustments might include:

- A phased return to work – possibly on reduced hours building up (usually over a 4 week period)
- Looking at aspects of the job that the person finds particularly stressful and temporarily reassigning them or sharing them
- Adjusting the content of the job temporarily
- Allowing the employee greater control over how they plan and manage their time or workload

- Allowing time off for attending therapeutic sessions, treatment, assessment and/or rehabilitation
- Changing shift patterns, or exploring different flexible working options such as part-time, job, share, annualised hours
- Altering start and finish times to avoid rush hour or to enable them to plan medication regimes etc.
- Look at what adjustments could be made to the physical environment if noisy etc.
- Offer a quiet place where they can go for time out if feeling anxious or stressed
- Sign post to the Family Care Adviser if this is an area of stress
- Providing support to develop skills identified as a training need
- Signposting to outside organisations
- Signposting to a support programme such as the Trust's Self Care Programme where they will be supported to review all aspects of their life and develop their own action plan to make them more resilient.
- Transferring temporarily, or permanently to another role within the Trust, another site or another department where returning to their old job is a barrier to getting them back, or keeping them at work.

Appendix D

Stress at Work – Consultation form to be completed by Manager in presence of member of staff

Employee Name:
Job Title:
Ward/Department:

1. Description of the problem, how and when did it arise, is it related to work/non-work/both; who is affected/involved; has anyone already been consulted; if work related, is employee having difficulty with communications, managerial relationships, workload, objectives, role, or supervisory responsibilities etc)

2. Remedial action (what support has already been offered; what action now needs to be taken to rectify this problem e.g. adjustments or alterations to job; who needs to be consulted; when will it be done & by whom)

Date for next review
 Manager Name
 Manager signature
 Employee signature
 Date

:

Appendix D (i)

Initial letter - To be sent by the manager when an employee has been absent with stress for 2 weeks with no prospect of return.

(Please note that this standard letter should be adapted to suit the individual and the circumstances)

[date]

Dear [first name]

I thought I would contact you to see how you are, and to say that I am sorry that you have been unwell. I understand that you have been unable to attend work as a result of stress, and I would like to offer any support and help.

If I can be of any assistance to you in supporting your recovery please feel free to contact me on [number] or by email at [email address].

I understand that this is no doubt a difficult time for you but it is important that you keep in touch with us. As I have mentioned above, this can be done simply through a phone call or email, or if you prefer by someone close to you who can keep us informed of your progress.

Could you please make sure that you send concurrent medical certificates to me on time so that we can process any sick pay that you may be entitled to.

As you have now been off work for more than 2 weeks with stress it is our normal policy to refer you to Occupational Health to offer any support or advice, which could include free access to our confidential staff counselling service. You should be hearing from Occupational Health shortly to discuss what they can do to help.

If you have any concerns that you would like to talk over, please do not hesitate to call and I will try to provide you with any help that I can.

Yours sincerely

Appendix D(ii)

Follow up letter - To be sent by the manager when an employee has been absent with stress for longer than 2 weeks and no response to initial letter or prospect of return.

(Please note that this standard letter should be adapted to suit the individual and circumstances)

[date]

Dear [first name]

I am sorry that you are still unwell and have been unable to return to work. I hope that you are starting to feel better. I do not appear to have heard from you since my letter dated [date] and I am writing again to offer you any help and support you need during your recovery.

I am concerned that I have still not heard from you and I would urge you to contact me on [number] or email at [email address] so that I can support you with any problems you may be experiencing.

I understand that when you feel unwell it is sometimes difficult to keep in contact. However, I wanted to reassure you that we can give you the support you need to help your recovery and return to work.

It is important that you keep in touch with us to keep us informed of your progress. If you are unable to telephone me, you could email me, or if you prefer ask someone close to you to keep me informed. Alternatively, if you would prefer to discuss the matter confidentially with Occupational Health or your trade union representative, then please contact them directly through the switchboard (01905 763333)

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

Appendix D(iii)

2nd follow up letter - To be sent by the manager when an employee has been absent with stress if there is no response to the earlier attempts at contact

(Please note that this standard letter should be adapted to suit the individual and circumstances)

[date]

Dear [first name]

I wrote to you on [date] and [date], and I am concerned that you have not been in touch.

I understand that when you feel unwell it is sometimes difficult to keep in contact. However, I wanted to reassure you that we can give you the support you need to help your recovery and return to work.

As I am sure you can understand, when we don't have any contact with you it is very difficult to plan ahead, and to balance both your needs and the needs of the service. It is also difficult to assess the best things to do to support your recovery and can affect any entitlement you may have to sick pay.

I hope you do feel able to contact me in the next few days on <number>, or if you would prefer please email me on [email address] or get a friend or relative to contact me. Alternatively if you would prefer to discuss the matter confidentially with Occupational Health or your trade union representative, then please contact them directly through the switchboard (01905 763333)

I look forward to hearing from you and hope that you are starting to feel better.

Yours sincerely

Appendix E

Frequently Asked Questions**Question 1: What do I do if someone is experiencing symptoms of stress as a result of a performance or conduct issue?**

Always maintain appropriate contact with the employee concerned. In the case of performance management, discuss and agree what help/support they may need to reduce their stress levels. Make sure that any agreements that are made are actioned, and that you regularly review their progress against targets. If their performance does not improve despite your intervention, check that there are no underlying health reasons that may be contributing to poor performance (you may need to seek advice from Occupational Health).

If an employee is facing disciplinary action and then reports sick due to stress, it is important to treat them in accordance with the normal sickness procedures, maintain contact, and advise them that the action will remain pending until their return. If their absence continues, contact your HR Advisor who will advise further on what might be done to bring the matter to a conclusion, which might involve getting Occupational Health advice regarding the employees fitness for work, the expected length of time for recovery and whether a speedier conclusion to the disciplinary issue might improve his/her health. It is not true that in all cases the disciplinary process has to be suspended whilst the employee is absent due to stress (refer to the Disciplinary Policy). Advice must be obtained from Occupational Health and the employee must be informed of the need for the referral.

Question 2: What do I do if the stress is related to a home issue?

Even if stress arises solely from a home or non-work issue it is still likely to impact an employee's work. Speak to the employee concerned, show your concern for their situation and offer any help and support that is reasonable given the particular set of circumstances. Follow the Management of Stress at Work Policy and make sure a record of your discussions are kept using the consultation form.

Question 3: What if the individual won't talk to their manager because they feel they are the cause of the stress?

Speak to the individual concerned, and complete the consultation form, as per policy. If the cause of stress involves an employee's relationship with their own manager, another manager or a more senior manager should conduct this consultation. The situation should be monitored on an on-going basis. The employee should be seen at regular intervals to ensure that no further issues have arisen, identify what further action is required, and to facilitate a resumption of full duties at a time that is mutually agreeable to all parties.

Question 4: When should I refer to Occupational Health?

If an employee is off sick for 2 weeks as a result of stress and there is no indication that they expect to return to work in the near future then you should refer them to occupational health. Free counselling is available for staff for both work related and other issues with a view to maintaining them at work or helping them to return.

Supporting Document 1 - Equality Impact Assessment Tool

To be completed by the key document author and attached to key document when submitted to the appropriate committee for consideration and approval.

		Yes/No	Comments
1.	Does the Policy/guidance affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of:		
	• Race	NO	
	• Ethnic origins (including gypsies and travellers)	NO	
	• Nationality	NO	
	• Gender	NO	
	• Culture	NO	
	• Religion or belief	NO	
	• Sexual orientation including lesbian, gay and bisexual people	NO	
	• Age	NO	
	• Disability- learning disability, physical disability, sensory impairment, mental health problems	No	
2.	Is there any evidence that some groups are affected differently?	NO	
3.	If you have identified potential discrimination, are any exceptions valid, legal and/or justifiable?	NO	
4.	Is the impact of the Policy/guidance likely to be negative?	NO	
5.	If so can the impact be avoided?		
6.	What alternatives are there to achieving the Policy/guidance without the impact?		
7.	Can we reduce the impact by taking different action?		

If you have identified a potential discriminatory impact of this key document, please refer it to the Head of Human Resources, together with any suggestions as to the action required to avoid/reduce this impact.

For advice in respect of answering the above questions, please contact Human Resources.

Supporting Document 2 – Financial Impact Assessment

To be completed by the key document author and attached to key document when submitted to the appropriate committee for consideration and approval.

	Title of document:	Yes/No
1.	Does the implementation of this document require any additional Capital resources	No
2.	Does the implementation of this document require additional revenue	No
3.	Does the implementation of this document require additional manpower	Resource implications for increased training
4.	Does the implementation of this document release any manpower costs through a change in practice	No
5.	Are there additional staff training costs associated with implementing this document which cannot be delivered through current training programmes or allocated training times for staff	Yes
	Other comments:	

If the response to any of the above is yes, please complete a business case and which is signed by your Finance Manager and Directorate Manager for consideration by the Accountable Director before progressing to the relevant committee for approval